From the Chair

Autumn is upon us and the SSAH is busy working on plans for our 2020 programme. This latest edition of the newsletter has feature articles, alongside updates on the SSAH’s activities and plans for the rest of 2019.

Since the last edition of the newsletter, we have hosted two events for our members. In June, we received a Curator’s tour of the Bridget Riley exhibition at the Scottish National Gallery from Leila Riszko, Curatorial Assistant. The exhibition spanned over 70 years of Riley’s work, highlighting the origins of Riley’s practice and pivotal moments in her acclaimed career. In August, we hosted a walking tour of Dundee’s unrivalled collection of public art guided by Matthew Jarron, Museum Curator at the University of Dundee. We had the opportunity to see highlights from the city’s collection of over 500 sculptures, mosaics, murals and other forms of public art. The accompanying Lamb Gallery exhibition, entitled Art for All: The Pioneering Story of Public Art in Dundee, provided further insights.

Looking ahead, Dr Helen Scott (Curator of Fine Art) will be giving a special tour of the exhibition Mary Cameron: Life in Paint at the Edinburgh City Art Centre on 16 November. Also in November, we will launch an extended edition of the SSAH’s journal for 2019/20, which will feature a selection of papers from our two-day symposium on ‘Sculpture in Scotland’ in February. More details to follow. Many thanks to the journal editors and contributors.

The SSAH has announced a call for papers for our study day for 2020, which will explore connections between the art history and visual culture of Scotland and North America, past and present. It will share and engage with current research and critical debate in the field. The study day will take place on 1 February, and further details about the event will be provided in the next newsletter.

The SSAH’s Research Support Grant scheme provides funding to assist with research costs and travel expenses. The next deadline for applications is 31 October 2019. More information is available in the following pages.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for your continuing support and enthusiasm for the SSAH. If you would like to share any ideas or news with the society, please do contact me on cr67@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Claire Robinson

SSAH Research Support Grants

The Scottish Society for Art History promotes scholarship in the history of Scottish art and art located in Scotland. To facilitate this, the SSAH offers research support grants from £50 to £500 to assist with research costs and travel expenses. Applicants must be working at a post-graduate level or above and should either be resident in Scotland or doing research that necessitates travel to Scotland. Application deadline: 31 October 2019. To apply for a research grant, send via e-mail:

- a cover letter
- current curriculum vitae
- a brief project description (300-500 words) specifying how the grant will be used and how it relates to a broader research agenda
- a budget
- the name and e-mail address of one reference
Further information can be found on the SSAH website: https://ssahistory.wordpress.com/grants/. Please email applications to scottishsocietyforarthistory@gmail.com, addressed to the Grants Officer.

Grant Report by Michelle Foot, Teaching Fellow of 19th Century Art, University of Edinburgh

My current research project considers the role of Spiritualism in Scotland’s Celtic Revival. In 1848 Spiritualism originated as a movement in America in the household of the Fox family who claimed they were able to contact the spirits of the dead. The family gained a large following which resulted in an international movement. Spiritualists claimed to make contact with spirits in séance circles, an event at which ‘sitters’ would form a circle and a medium would channel the spirits from the afterlife. By 1866 the first Spiritualist Association in Scotland was established in Glasgow. Concurrent with Spiritualism’s Golden Age in the final decades of the 19th century, artists began expressing Spiritualist beliefs and ideas in their artworks. Meanwhile Spiritualists reflected on the history of their movement, determined to claim that Spiritualism was an ancient ‘truth’ rather than a modern phenomenon, and in doing so cited historic and folkloric examples which apparently demonstrated mediumistic and séance phenomena. One theme that became popular was the notion that, as ancient mediums, Druids conducted séances at stone circles.

These ideas were also of interest to other occult movements, such as Theosophy, and previous scholarship has mostly focused on the Theosophical influence on fin de siècle artists. However, the role of Spiritualism in the development of these ideas and its subsequent cultural impact on Scottish art tends to be overlooked. I was grateful for the SSAH Research Grant to visit the Hornel Archive at Broughton House in Kirkcudbright. As part of my preliminary research for the start of a new in-depth project which considers the role of Spiritualism in the Celtic Revival, it was useful to read the letters and material relating to Edward Atkinson Hornel and George Henry’s collaborative painting The Druids Bringing in the Mistletoe (1890). The focus here was to investigate Archibald Standish Hartrick’s claim that prior to painting this work Hornel consulted a rural Galloway seer, who allegedly had a vision of the Druids. During the zeitgeist of Spiritualism such seers were often understood as clairvoyant mediums and I was interested in ascertaining the possibility of the artists’ interest in the movement. The research at this early stage was helpful and provided new information and lines of enquiry.

Grant Report by Rose Roberto, Research Associate, Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, University of Reading

Thanks to the generosity of the Scottish Society for Art History, I was able to go to Edinburgh at the end of April to meet with museum curators and research coordinators at National Museums Scotland regarding support from NMS Enterprises for a publication project (discussed further below) and to conduct further research at the National Library of Scotland’s W. & R. Chambers Archives, extending the work of my PhD topic.

New information collected on this trip included uncovering archival material related to women who contributed articles to two editions of Chambers’s Encyclopaedia: A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge, first produced in the 1860s and then between 1888 and 1892. This information was found in a photograph album of more than 330 contributors. I also studied correspondence from the W. & R. Chambers firm with another publisher based in the US regarding copyright and what both firms could practically do in lieu of clear international copyright law to protect both parties in their respective countries.

This visit resulted in short-term and long-term outcomes for me as a researcher. The first short-term outcome resulted in a book chapter proposal for Women in Print, a two-volume collection which will contain chapters aiming to recover the narratives of the lives, work and impact of historical women in all aspects of printing and print culture from the early modern period to the 20th century, which will be published by the Centre for Printing History and Culture (CPHC). The second short-term outcome resulted in a book chapter that will be part of (recently retitled) Art, Copyright, and the Image Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century edited by Professor Will Slaughter and Professor Marie-Stéphanie Delamaire. A collected volume will be published as an e-book by Open Book Publishers, based in Cambridge. From 20-21 June 2019, contributors were invited to an in-person meeting that united a diverse and global group of scholars—experts in material culture, art, law, and literature—in discussions that explored the relationship between copyright law and the artistic, economic, and technological factors of the 19th century. Art, Copyright, and the Image Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century will present new research in a coherent and unified collection of essays on 19th-century images and copyright practices, and it will be published with a creative commons licence so that all scholars from any discipline can access it. Of interest to
members of SSAH, an architectural historian and a legal historian who are both Glasgow-based are also contributing to this book. The third short-term outcome is a successful conference proposal for *Cultures of the Book: Science, Technology and the Spread of Knowledge* conference in November taking place in Pescara, Italy. This conference will explore the physicality and culture of the book, looking not only at the word, but also images, including woodcuts, engravings, photographs and digital images.

The two long-term outcomes are related to ongoing monographs that I am currently undertaking. The first monograph will be called *Illustrating Animals in the 19th Century, Popular Taste from Bewick to Beardsley*. This beautifully illustrated book will provide a social and cultural overview of how animals were utilised to illustrate children’s fables, self-improvement works, scientific and anatomical studies, artistic designs in everyday items, and in political satire. It will also explain how animals were rendered in relief, intaglio, and planographic methods and it will consider the wider social-economic impact of these technologies in the Industrial Age. The proposal for this book has been accepted by CPHC for publication in association with Peter Lang and NMS Enterprises with a view to having this work ready by the second half of 2020. The second ongoing monograph, entitled, *Democratising Knowledge: how 19th-century publishers transformed encyclopedias for mass education*, extends my dissertation research beyond my PhD thesis to provide more detailed information on W. & R. Chambers’ encyclopedias in comparison with content, production, and reception of other low-cost encyclopedia publishers of the 19th century such as Charles Knight (English) and D. Appleton & Company (American). It is with sincere gratitude to the SSAH that I submit this report.

Reviews

Review – SSAM Walking Tour of Public Art in Dundee, 31 August 2019
By Claire Robinson, Museum Collections Unit, University of St Andrews

In August, SSAH members and friends enjoyed a walking tour of public art in Dundee guided by Matthew Jarron, Museum Curator at the University of Dundee. The event commenced with a look at the exhibition *Art for All – The Pioneering Story of Public Art in Dundee* inside the Lamb Gallery in the University's Tower Building. The exhibition explores the history of public art in city, with a particular focus on the Blackness Public Art Programme of the early 1980s, which attracted international acclaim for its pioneering approach. It marked the beginning of the local authority’s investment in culture-led regeneration, and was expanded in 1985 to become the Dundee Public Art Programme. This was the first city-wide public art programme in the country and was the largest programme in Scotland throughout its existence. The exhibition showcases photographs of artworks past and present, as well as unique behind-the-scenes material such as models, design sketches and installation images. Since 2018, the University of Dundee has been working with various partners including Dundee City Council, Menzieshill Photography Group, Art UK and Historic Environment Scotland on a major project to research, catalogue and promote Dundee’s unique public art collection. Some of the results can be seen at [https://www.facebook.com/publicartdundee/](https://www.facebook.com/publicartdundee/).

Mural by Chisme on Douglas Street Graffiti Wall, 2019

Following the exhibition, we braved the changeable August weather to visit a small sample of Dundee’s constantly evolving collection of over 500 sculptures, murals, mosaics and other forms of public art. On route to the Blackness area, we had the opportunity to view several examples of public art on the University of Dundee’s campus, including Elaine Shemilt’s *Scales of Life* created as an art/science commission for the University’s main Life Sciences building. The 2013 work consists of sixteen metal cladding panels that feature artistic abstractions which representing the four key scales of life - Molecular, Organellar, Cellular and Tissue. These were created in collaboration with Life Sciences researchers and the architect Jo White.
In Blackness we viewed key works from the Blackness Public Art Programme, for which artworks were created in collaboration with businesses, residents, council planners and architects. Highlights included Stanley Bonnar’s *Shadow of Trees* on Miln Street and J. Keith Donnelly’s Saltire Award-winning ceramic panels on Bellfield Street. Passing by Okolo’s ceramic graffiti from 2018 on Milne’s East Wynd, we then viewed several newly created works on a graffiti wall on Douglas Street. These included a giant seagull created by the aptly named C. Gull and a mural by the Spanish duo Chisme (aka Asier and Müs) commissioned by Streetart360. Stan Bonnar’s *Pyramid and Canopies* sited over former underground public toilets at the West Port was the final commission from the Blackness Public Art Programme, completed in 1986.

Outside the Dundee Rep Theatre, we admired Jill Randall and Sarah Daly’s railings, mosaics and banner pole, which were created as part of the refurbishment of Tay Square in 1997. This was followed by several works near Dundee Science Centre including Dalziel + Scullion’s *Catalyst* outside Greenmarket multi-storey car park. This inspirational 2008 work is cast from special catalytic cement that absorbs pollution from cars and converts it into harmless nitrates. Close by was Alister White’s kinetic sculpture *Strange Attractor II* on West Marketgait, which was commissioned as part of the centenary celebrations of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in 1992.

We then ventured along Dundee’s High Street where we saw a wide range of works, from David F. Wilson’s series of 25 bronzes that have adorned the façade of the Overgate Shopping Centre since 2000 to Tony & Susie Morrow’s iconic Desperate Dan and Minnie the Minx sculptures, unveiled in 2001. Perhaps most popular are Angela Hunter’s penguin sculptures outside the City Churches, waddling along a wall in the direction of the *Discovery*. Regularly dressed up for special occasions, they even have their own unofficial Facebook page! Thank you to Matthew for organising and delivering such a popular tour!

### SSAH Upcoming Events

**Curator’s Tour of Mary Cameron: Life in Paint**
Edinburgh City Art Centre, 16 November, 11am-12pm.

Join us for a tour of the exhibition *Mary Cameron: Life in Paint*. Dr Helen Scott (Curator of Fine Art) will provide a special tour of this exhibition which celebrates the life and career of pioneering Edinburgh-born artist Mary Cameron (1865-1921).

Mary Cameron was a woman ahead of her time. Born in Edinburgh, she began her artistic career as a portraitist and genre painter in her native city, before venturing abroad to study in Paris. Foreign travel proved to be an enduring source of inspiration. In 1900 she visited Madrid for the first time, and became captivated by the Spanish culture, people and scenery. Establishing studios in Madrid and Seville, she painted large-scale compositions of traditional peasant life, dramatic bullfights and rural landscapes. Cameron exhibited widely during her lifetime, and her talents were admired by contemporaries such as John Lavery and Alexander Roche. However, like so many female artists of her generation, her name is now little known.

*Mary Cameron: Life in Paint* places this forgotten artist back in the spotlight. It explores the fascinating story of Cameron’s life and career, charting her creative journey from elegant family portraits to breathtaking Spanish scenes. The exhibition features over 40 rarely seen artworks from public and private collections, complemented by historic photographs and archival material. Tickets can be booked via Eventbrite: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/curators-tour-of-mary-cameron-life-in-paint-edinburgh-city-art-centre-tickets-73875753367](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/curators-tour-of-mary-cameron-life-in-paint-edinburgh-city-art-centre-tickets-73875753367)
Aberdeen Art Gallery re-opens
By Margaret Sweetnam (Marketing Manager) and Shona Elliott (Lead Curator – Collections Access), Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums

Aberdeen Art Gallery, the Remembrance Hall and concert venue Cowdray Hall reopen on 2 November 2019 following completion of a £34.6 million redevelopment project which has renovated and rejuvenated these three adjacent buildings. Funded predominantly by Aberdeen City Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project has transformed the site with investment in the fabric of the buildings, new display galleries, improved visitor facilities and an enhanced activity programme. This article explores some of the building changes and introduces you to the collection and new exhibitions.

Scotland has a Recognition Scheme that celebrates, promotes and invests in nationally significant collections, and the entire collection of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums is classed as such. Aberdeen Art Gallery now displays over 1000 artworks and historical items from this rich collection; triple the amount that was on show prior to the site’s closure in 2015. We are exhibiting works by important Scottish artists, designers and makers such as Henry Raeburn, Joan Eardley, Samuel Peploe, Rachel McLean, Bill Gibb and James Cromar Watt, as well as artworks by nationally and internationally-acclaimed artists including Barbara Hepworth, Francis Bacon, Tracey Emin and Claude Monet.

Installing Portrait of a Lady (The Artist’s Wife) by William Dyce, 1856

The Schoolhill complex of buildings has been completely reimagined and transformed by Hoskins Architects and exhibition designers Studioarc to meet both the needs of visitors and requirements for the care of the collection. Improvements include:

- Restoring and modernising the Grade A-listed building and significantly improving access and wayfinding for all visitors. This has included creating level access from Schoolhill and opening up vistas throughout the building as well as views across the city from the new second floor.
- Increasing the number of spaces for the display of the permanent collections from 11 to 19.
- Re-interpreting the collections to provide a more enjoyable and enriching visitor experience, including the use of digital interactives and personal in-gallery playlists.
• A striking new top floor housing The BP Galleries which will host three national and international touring exhibitions a year. BP announced £1m support for the project earlier this year.

• Repairing and modernising the Cowdray Hall, preserving its celebrated acoustic and enhancing its status as an excellent small-scale concert venue.

• Improving the overall visitor experience by providing a more visually welcoming entrance area, clearer signage, enhanced retail and catering facilities and new learning and activity spaces.

• Refurbishing the Remembrance Hall and re-establishing it as a quiet place for reflection.

• Stabilising environmental conditions to help preserve the collection.

We also have a fresh new approach to displaying our works. The site’s galleries explore artists’ ideas and inspiration, their creative processes and the materials they use. A wide range of art, hands-on interactives, music, innovative display methods and engaging interpretive information combine to create a range of experiences, moods and stories for visitors. Prior to the re-development Aberdeen Art Gallery mainly exhibited fine art, but we have now included many pieces of decorative art, such as textiles, jewellery, ceramics and glass, alongside items from the history collection e.g. John Brown’s skene dhu and pocket watch, a Neolithic granite ball and a letter written by Emmeline Pankhurst. Prior to closure, we mainly grouped the permanent collections into periods of time and specific artistic movements. In 2019, we have kept this traditional approach in some rooms (e.g G10: French Impressions) but we’re exploring more diverse themes as well e.g. G16: Shoreline and G5: Crafting Colour.

The galleries are:

**Sculpture Court**
From plaster casts to broken glass, explore the three-dimensional world of sculpture.

**Remembrance Hall**
A space for contemplation and commemoration, honouring Aberdeen lives lost in conflict from the First World War to the present day.

**Cowdray Hall**
Funded by a gift from Annie, Viscountess Cowdray, to encourage ‘a taste for art and music in the City of Aberdeen’, this hall was opened in 1925. Renowned for its exceptional acoustic, many local, national and international artists have performed here.

**Gallery 1: Collecting Art**
For over 130 years we have been collecting art for Aberdeen. Discover the origins of Aberdeen Art Gallery and explore what we collect and why.

**Gallery 2: Special Exhibitions**
A changing programme of exhibitions showcasing work by local schools, colleges, arts organisations and artists.

**Gallery 3: Special Exhibitions / Artist-in-Residence**
As well as presenting traditional exhibitions, film and digital art, this flexible space can be transformed into an artist-in-residence studio, shining a light on the creative process.

**Gallery 4: Human Presence**
Discover the many ways contemporary artists depict the human body, either directly or through its absence.

**Gallery 5: Crafting Colour**
Discover how makers have perfected techniques in their craft, the materials they use and the paints, dyes and glazes with which they choose to embellish their works – or reject colour entirely.
Gallery 6: Feasting
Explore the utensils, drinking vessels and tableware designed over centuries to keep us fed and watered.

Gallery 7: Exploring Art
What inspires artists? Is it a landscape, a story, a still life from nature? What inspires you? Play and create!

Gallery 8: Adorning
Beauty, identity, status and protest: get up close to statement jewellery and take a look at how and why we adorn our bodies.

Gallery 9: Balmoral Phenomenon
Explore the royal love affair with Balmoral and the Scottish Highlands and discover how artists from different eras interpret 19th-century notions of Scottishness.

Gallery 10: French Impressions
Discover the far-reaching influence of French and Scottish art of the late 19th century through exquisite pairings of works by French and Scottish artists exploring the same ideas.

Gallery 11: First World War Remembered
A space for contemplation and reflection on local people’s experiences of war and conflict.

Gallery 12: Around Art Deco
Ceramics and glassware inspired by the bold, geometric designs of the 1920s and 30s.

Gallery 13: James McBey – Artist Adventurer
Delve into the life and passions of Aberdeenshire-born James McBey, self-taught etcher, draftsman and painter, war artist and society portraitist.

McBey Library
Browse the shelves of this dedicated art reference library, with thousands of books, catalogues and periodicals about fine and decorative art to explore.

Gallery 14: Art of Empowerment
From artist’s muse, to maker to activist, consider the changing status of women through art and craft of the late 19th / early 20th century.

Gallery 15: Paradise Lost
Discover how the idea of a creative paradise came under threat from the horrors of mechanised warfare in the early part of the 20th century.

Gallery 16: Shoreline
Many artists look to the sea as a source of inspiration, particularly in Scotland. Some identify themselves with a particular stretch of coast, others are drawn to objects washed up on the shore.

Gallery 17: Abstract Art
Get to know the language of abstract art - a kind of visual thinking with colour, shape and form based on the inner experience of the artist rather than the appearance of outer reality.

Gallery 18: People and Portraits
Whether symbols of ancestry, reminders of dynasties or tools of propaganda, why are we so obsessed with portraits?

Gallery 19: Express Yourself
Celebrating local artists who express themselves, their families and their lives in their art.

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Re-assembling Lorenzo de Medici, plaster cast after Michelangelo’s marble original in the Medici Chapel

A number of visitors’ favourites are on display, including the oil and beeswax Gallowgate Lard by Ken Currie (http://www.aagm.co.uk/theCollections/objects/object/Gallowgate-Lard), oil painting To Pastures New (http://www.aagm.co.uk/theCollections/objects/object/To-Pastures-New) by Sir James Guthrie and Flood in the Highlands by Sir Edwin Landseer (http://www.aagm.co.uk/theCollections/objects/object/Flood-in-the-Highlands). We have also re-introduced some favourites not seen for a while, including a selection from our collection of 93 artists’ portraits commissioned in the late 1800s by the Aberdeen
granite merchant, art collector and one of the Founders of Aberdeen Art Gallery, Alexander Macdonald. Macdonald became friends with many of the artists whose work he collected. He sent out small canvases, all the same size, for them to paint self-portraits, or asked other artists to paint portraits of leading artists of the day. Names include Lord Frederick Leighton, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Sir George Reid, Joseph Farquharson and Sir John Everett Millais. In addition to preparing the old favourites, we have been actively acquiring and we’re looking forward to showing you recent additions to our Recognised Collection of National Significance.

Doors open to the public on Saturday 2 November, with advance bookings and timed slots to manage demand over the first two days and to ensure the best experience for visitors. It is likely that weekend places will be fully booked by the time this newsletter is distributed, but free regular access will be possible from Monday 4 November. To find out more about Aberdeen Art Gallery, including ways to support it, please visit www.aagm.co.uk.

New features at Aberdeen Art Gallery

All images © Aberdeen City Council (Art Gallery & Museums Collections)

The Artist’s Vision
By Fiona Pearson, independent researcher and previously Senior Curator for National Galleries of Scotland

This article was written for the Traditional Cosmology Society Conference held at St Andrews University on 5 September 1987. It explores how artists’ insights into the human condition, using their own experiences, religion and other cultures, can make us more aware of our world today.
William Blake (1757-1827) - artist, writer and poet. The combination of these three arts has made Blake’s vision of central importance to our understanding of art to this day. In Plate 4 of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Blake shows a composition of dualities. On one side is light over the sea and to the left is dark over the land. A clothed male figure sits upon the shore and a nude woman flies up in a wave above his huddled form. It is the conflict between male and female natures and the destruction when one dominates the other is the central motif of this work. Only when both natures are evenly balanced through ‘the Breath Divine’ does Albion become whole (ed. J. Bronowski, *William Blake*, 1958).

Hans Arp (1886-1966) in his 1962 sculpture *S’elevant* (Rising Up), [https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/243/sélévant-rising](https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/243/sélévant-rising), repeats the wave form of Blake and yet it is rooted in and springs from the earth. Arp too expresses the unity and interdependence of opposite creative forces equally balanced.

In 1922 the German writer Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) was also concerned with the problem of opposing forces. He wrote an essay on ‘Exotic Art’ in his book *My Beliefs*, which looked at the effect of tribal or ‘primitive’ art on early 20th century artists and asked the question, why now? He recognised that the exotic art was being welcomed into a Europe in decline:

> times when such an atmosphere of collapse prevails, strange gods always emerge – and appear more like devils...This is how I feel about the incursion of exotic art from Brazil, from Benin, from New Caledonia, from New Guinea. It shows Europe its antitype, it exhales beginnings and fierce virility, it smells of jungles and crocodiles.

Sir Jacob Epstein, *The Risen Christ*, GMA 1092
© Estate of Jacob Epstein

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) worked and studied in Paris during this period of rebirth. He, like many other artists, collected non-Western art and studied the examples in public collections. Epstein’s appreciation of the art of early civilisations and indigenous people brought a direct, expressive quality into his work. In 1917, a period of war service led to a nervous breakdown and on his recovery, Epstein modelled the figure of *The Risen Christ*. The slender draped figure has
the quiet dignity of a Romanesque portal sculpture. The head is a portrait of his friend the Dutch composer Bernard van Dieren (1887-1936) and has been modelled boldly in a series of planes. The head stares straight ahead, mask-like and yet the hands gesture. With one attenuated forefinger, Christ points to the hideous wound in the other hand.

Twenty years later Epstein completed another figure of Christ, Consummatum Est (It is finished), also in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. The massive recumbent figure was carved out of a block of alabaster. The smooth, translucent material gives a vibrant quality to the rough block-like shape. An impassive Assyrian head, beard jutting forward, strains to rise up from the prone position and again as if presenting the cruel reality of death the wounded hands are held up, palms to the sky. Epstein’s autobiography records that he was inspired to make this work by Bach’s B Minor Mass. He imagined the figure lying in a chapel-like vault. Unhappily the public was not receptive to his approach and the final cruelty was the purchase of Consommatum Est by the Tussaud family and its display as a freak sideshow at Blackpool for some years.

The virile strength of many of Epstein’s stone carvings, primitive and bold both in technique and presentation was the stumbling block to their acceptance by the general public who were still adherents to the Ruskinian ideals of truth and beauty. However, it was Ruskin’s statement that ‘industry without art is brutality’ which the sculptor Eric Gill (1882-1940) looked to in his approach to art in the modern world. He, like Epstein, carved directly in stone but he saw his work in direct relationship to the mason carvers of the Middle Ages. His art was part of his religious devotion and therefore part of a way of life. He and his family lived as a religious community and so art as rhetoric was for him a way of communicating that religious devotion. Thus in the stone Christ on the Cross relief, Christ blesses the spectator from the cross. This crucifix is similar in style to one of c.1910-12 in Tate Britain, thus both works were executed at the community in Ditchling in Sussex.

In 1921, the young David Jones (1895-1974) joined the Gill household and stayed with them for four years, moving with them to Capel-y-ffin near Tintern in 1924. The Celtic heritage of Jones played a large part in his art and writing. The Welsh tradition of mystery and magic through folk legends also inspired Jones to communicate such qualities through his art. His c. 1950 work on paper Glass Chalice with flowers and mug (https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/1320/glass-chalice-flowers-and-mug) is thus also a communion cup which celebrates the vibrant life of natural creation. The window latch is the entrance to another world, a realm of the unknown and the dappled splashes of colours create a sense of heightened expectation.
The combination of active and passive is also to be found in the work of another Welsh artist, Gwen John (1876-1939), whose *Self Portrait* of 1899-1900 is in Tate Britain. Like Gill, John had an all-consuming passion for her art. Although she was to become religiously inclined towards the end of her life, the many preliminary sketches left in the studio at her death in 1939 show that it was her artistic passion, her ability to repeat endlessly one idea until a final, crystallized image emerged. The studies of nuns were made from life at the convent at Meudon on the outskirts of Paris. But the inspiration for the c. 1920-25 compositions as *Young Nun* was a Jansenist portrait of the 17th century of the convent’s founder Mère Poussepin. In nearly all her Meudon works showing the human figure, Gwen John did not contrive to make a realistic portrait, but strove to present the essence of the persona by simplifying the tonality, shapes and form into an almost abstract composition.

![Gwen John, A Young Nun](https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/258/girl)

Gwen John, *A Young Nun*, GMA 1116
National Galleries of Scotland. Purchased 1970

Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) also had a very personal approach to his work which amounted to a passion. His initial admiration of the work of Giotto and the Pre-Raphaelites was strangely blended with an ability to set a religious scene within the context of his native Cookham in Berkshire. The peculiar mixture of naivety and acute perception together with a biographical element makes his work unique within the history of 20th century religious art. His 1950 oil on canvas painting *Christ Delivered to the People* (https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/868/christ-delivered-people) was created at a time of personal crisis. Hounded by the press following a charge of obscenity, rejected by the Royal Academy, and in the midst of a rather bitter divorce settlement, Spencer told his own story in the delivering of Christ to the people. In the right foreground is his second wife Patricia Preece who had asset stripped him, a clawed hand extended, and the only figure to move towards Christ is the veiled figure of his first wife, Hilda Carline.

The aftermath of the Second World War left its mark upon the artist’s vision of the world. The large oil of *Le Lever* (https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/394/le-lever-getting) by Balthus (1908-2001) is a classically inspired composition but the awkward position of the woman, the loss of her facial features and the green tinge to the flesh are de-humanizing too. This loss of humanitarian senses, the ‘geometry of fear’ is also present in the 1957 bronze sculpture *Girl* (https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/258/girl) by Reg Butler (1913-1981). Once more in the pool in front of Inverleith House in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, it can very easily be seen as a charming object. But when placed in conjunction with the Balthus, with its featureless face, the claw-like feet and the arm ripped away at the shoulder, the work takes on a different meaning.

Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) painted the oil *Villa sur la route* (https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/481/villa-sur-la-route-villa-road) also in 1957. It is an Art Brut work, one that has totally rejected the aesthetic ideals of our so-called civilisation and embraced influences from other cultures and time periods. Cave art, graffiti, non-Western art and child art were all re-assessed at this time. Brutalism and nihilism were also explored as logical extensions of these ideas. Further discussion on this subject matter can be found in Thomas McEvilley’s *Art and otherness: crisis in cultural identity* (New York 1998).

The Scottish sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005), from his move to England in 1946 and then Paris and London, took up the theme of the readymade object as a work of art. Paolozzi’s bronze sculpture *Icarus (First version)*, which he created in 1957 (https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/338/icarus-first-version), is a stunted totemic...
figure, a fusion of parts. He makes no religious or spiritual claims for his work. But the extraordinary breadth of his attention to objects from non-western and western civilisations has brought a magical quality to his work. In 1962, the year that Four Towers was fabricated in aluminium and painted (https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/339/four-towers), Paolozzi made a film The History of Nothing. Here are some extracts from the script notes:

The history of the painting. The history of the object. The history of man can be written in objects. All sculpture is a man-made object. Machine as fetish. Cylinder block Trojans column carefully in a tiled interior … Beyond form Within the meaning the structure of references, allusions... Layers of paradox...Recognition of man-made objects Musical references, etc...Rejection a tool as important as say acceptance A continual diary of opposites... Nature as fabricator, man as engineer.”

New Exhibition

Among the Polar Ice
The McManus: Dundee’s Art Gallery & Museum
7 September 2019 – 8 March 2020

The exhibition Among the Polar Ice provides artistic insights into these fragile landscapes, featuring contemporary and older works by artists who have experienced life on the ice. The works have been selected from Dundee’s nationally significant fine art and whaling collections which span 200 years. A key series exhibited is The Antarctic Suite by Frances Walker. She travelled to the South Pole in 2007 and visited the Antarctic Peninsula, South Shetlands, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. Upon returning to Aberdeen, Walker painted a series of icescapes capturing the isolation and beauty. The exhibition also features Arctic paintings created by James Morrison. These works depict the glacial landscape of Otto Fiord, Ellesmere Island. During his time there, Morrison stayed in a tented camp and worked in extreme conditions whilst creating his depictions of the scenes. For more information, visit www.themcmanus.eventbrite.com.

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